



Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

A Complete Catechesis for Christian Living

Doctrinal Catechesis Session
Mary Birmingham

THE HOLY SPIRIT



Pentecost: This icon is the part of the iconostasis of the Greek Catholic Cathedral of Hajdúdorog, Hungary.
The icon was painted around 1810.

This icon is the last one in the row of the Great Feasts of the iconostasis.



Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening prayer

Option 1: Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday Liturgy.

Option 2: Use the prayer provided below.

Prayer of Pope Clement XI

Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith.

I trust in you: strengthen my trust.

I love you: let me love you more and more.

I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.

I worship you as my first beginning.

I long for you as my last end.

I praise you as my constant helper.

And I call you as my loving protector.

I want to do what you ask of me:

In the way you ask, for as long as you ask, because you ask it.

Let me love you, Lord, as my God.

And see myself as I really am: a pilgrim in this world.

A Christian called to respect and love all those lives I
touch.

✓ Note to the Catechist

There may be more material than you can use in a one-hour session.
Select and arrange accordingly. Use questions and material that is best
suited for your particular group.



Read the connecting statement

to draw the line between this week's
liturgy and this chosen doctrinal theme.

This connecting statement is found in the *Breaking
Open the Word* worksheet for this week.

Catholic Faith, Life & Creed Version 2.0

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Version 2.0 reflects all recent revisions in
the Roman Missal.

NIHIL OBSTAT
Rev. Steven Olds
Censor Liborum

IMPRIMATUR
† Most Rev. John Noonan
Bishop of Orlando

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Editors: Bill Huebsch, Diana
Macalintal, & Nick Wagner

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Sharing Human Experience

Catechist introduces this session in these or similar words:

- ▶ Christians believe that the Holy Spirit continues the presence, life, and work of Christ in the world today. Even if we are unaware, the Spirit is active in our lives. When we awaken to that presence, we look at our lives in a completely different way.

Catechist invites participants to engage in the following exercise. They will need paper and pens.

- ▶ Consider your lives. Take a panoramic view. Consider the movements, transitions, and key events. As you look back on your life, can you see evidence of the Spirit's work, the Spirit's promptings (perhaps unheeded, but prompting nevertheless)?
- ▶ Make a list of all the key events in your life. Leave space under each event. Initially, just list the events.
- ▶ After you have listed the events, go back and spend a moment of reflection on each event.
- ▶ How might the Spirit have been present in that event?
- ▶ Write your responses under each event.

Allow ten minutes for this exercise. Catechist invites participants to share insights gleaned with one other person for a brief period and then surface insights in the wider group.

- ▶ What did you learn about the Holy Spirit's role in your life from this exercise?
- ▶ What we know about the Holy Spirit we learned from Jesus himself and from the gospels, especially the Gospel of John. Just what do the Scriptures teach us about the Holy Spirit?

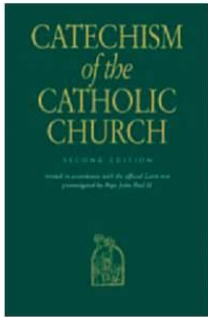
Scripture and the Holy Spirit

Catechist invites participants to engage in another exercise. Divide the following citations. Either make copies of the text or provide Bibles. Divide the large group into smaller groups of three or four. Use all the citations; some groups may need to examine more than one citation. Invite the groups to appoint a scribe to record their responses on poster paper. Each poster paper should be titled: "SCRIPTURE AND THE HOLY SPIRIT." Write the citation(s) on the poster paper and have them posted around the room. Write the answer to the following question on the poster paper: What do your Bible verses teach us about the Holy Spirit?

- ✓ John 7:33-39
- ✓ John 14:5-13 & 15-17
- ✓ John 14:23-26
- ✓ John 15:23-26
- ✓ John 16:5-7
- ✓ John 16:12-15
- ✓ Mark 1:7-13
- ✓ Luke 4:17-21

Catechist invites participants to summarize what was learned about the Holy Spirit in this exercise.

Catechist helps draw conclusions.



Sharing Catholic Doctrine

Drawn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Refer to articles 683-747.

Catechist continues:

Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Dominum et vivificantem (On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World)*, invites reflection on the mystery of the Holy Spirit. In this encyclical, Pope John Paul II reminds us:

- ▶ Our belief in the Holy Spirit comes directly from Jesus Christ in the gospels.
- ▶ We profess that the Holy Spirit is the “Lord and giver of life” in the Nicene Creed we pray at every Mass.
- ▶ Believers are able to profess faith in Christ because of the work of the Holy Spirit. In order to enter into communion with Jesus, we must first have been touched by the power of the Holy Spirit. In order to know the Father whom Jesus came to reveal to us, we must first be touched by the power of the Spirit. The Spirit, however, was revealed to us last.
- ▶ God the Father was powerfully revealed in the Old Testament. Jesus, on the other hand, was revealed more obscurely. He was foreshadowed and understood in terms of type, a future coming, an obscure though evident witness in the Old Testament. The New Testament, on the other hand, clearly reveals Jesus, and Jesus clearly reveals the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ We are given the gift of the Holy Spirit at baptism.

Catechist invites group discussion.

- ▶ If the Holy Spirit is given at baptism, does this mean that the Holy Spirit is not with us until we are baptized?
- ▶ What if I am not baptized until I am older?
- ▶ Does that mean God's Spirit is not with me until that moment?

Engage in a discussion. Invite participants to respond to the question. If they say that of course the Spirit is with us before baptism, then ask why we say we are given the Spirit at baptism.

(A response might be: Just as the sacrament of reconciliation celebrates the reconciliation already accomplished by Christ on the Cross, so too baptism notices and celebrates in a special way the Holy Spirit that is with us throughout our lives. Yes, we are given the sacramental experience of the Spirit at baptism; we sacramentally experience the Spirit who is present and continues to invite us into deep communion with God in Christ.)

Catechist continues:

- ▶ We affirm that the Holy Spirit has spoken to us through the prophets.
- ▶ The Gospel of John provides us with the primary biblical source of our belief in the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ The evangelist affirms that the Holy Spirit has been given to us as life-giving water. This same image of Spirit as life-giving water was also used in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman and with Nicodemus in which he spoke of new birth in water and the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ Our belief in the Spirit of Christ comes to us not only directly from Jesus but also from the witness of believers at Pentecost when the Spirit was given to the Church.
- ▶ The earliest Christian communities expressed faith in the Holy Spirit as the living presence of Christ, as the giver of new life, as the person of the Triune God *who communicates to us the truth of the Trinity*, that is, Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the One God and as the source of everlasting life.
- ▶ The Church invites us to more deeply reflect on the mystery of and power of the Holy Spirit in our life and times.
 - What does that mean? Pope John Paul II tells us that we are to meditate on the mystery and plumb its depths. What is that mystery?
- ▶ The Holy Spirit is the continued presence of Christ.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit is the source of Christian unity.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit is the source of Christian love and the energy, life, and dynamism of faith we experience.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit drives us in our quest to encounter Christ as Savior of the world; the primary role of the Spirit in the Church is to lead us in that quest.
 - “She is compelled by the Holy Spirit to do her part towards the full realization of the will of God, who has established Christ as the source of salvation for the whole world” (Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 17).
- ▶ The Holy Spirit continues today as the teacher of the good news Christ came to preach.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit will help people understand what salvation means in the midst of “changing conditions and circumstances” (4). In other words, the Spirit will continue to teach the Church today just as Christ taught the Apostles.
- ▶ While Jesus is the primary witness of God to human beings, the Spirit guides the Church as Christ continues to reveal God to the world.
- ▶ The revelation of Christ requires faith. In other words, it takes faith to believe in Christ, the Son of God who died for the salvation of the world.
- ▶ That faith is given and nurtured by the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ An intimate bond exists between Jesus and the Holy Spirit since it is the Spirit who permanently ensures “the transmission and spreading of the Good News revealed by Jesus of Nazareth” (7).

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in dyads and then share insights in the wider group. Catechist shares a story from his or her life and then invites others to similarly answer the questions and share from their life experience. See appendix #1 for an example.

- ▶ Pope John Paul II tells us that the Holy Spirit is the source of Christian love and the energy, life, and dynamism of faith we experience and that the Holy Spirit drives us in our quest to encounter Christ as Savior of the world and the primary role of the Spirit in the Church is to lead us in that quest.
- ▶ If that is true, what does that say to us about the doubts we experience?
- ▶ What is the Spirit's role in such doubts?
- ▶ Do you ever doubt that you are saved by the power of the cross of Christ?
- ▶ Do you ever doubt that Jesus was raised from the dead?
- ▶ What do our doubts teach us about the role of the Holy Spirit?

Scriptural Testimony

- ▶ The Holy Spirit, and the Trinity itself, is attested to in Scripture.
- ▶ Testimony is corroborated by a “higher order, mentioned by all three Synoptics” (gospels) (JP11, 19). In other words, the voice of God himself testifies to the reality of the Trinity, to Christ his Son and to the Holy Spirit who came down upon Christ at his baptism in the Jordan.
- ▶ What greater authority could there be?
- ▶ John baptized Jesus in the Jordan. The heaven opened, a dove descended and rested upon Jesus. A voice from heaven proclaimed him “Son.”
- ▶ This event is referred to as a theophany, a manifestation of God, God revealing himself to human beings.
- ▶ This event not only underscores the truth of the Trinity and the role of the Holy Spirit, but it affirms Christ as the “Beloved Son of God.”
- ▶ Once Jesus returned to his Father at his ascension, the Spirit's work was set in motion.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit opened the eyes of the first witnesses and helped them understand all that Jesus revealed to them. The Spirit continues that same work of clarity, understanding, and revelation for all generations.

Church testimony

- ▶ We know the Holy Spirit through our life in the Church. How do we know the Spirit in the Church?
 - Through Scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit.
 - Through Tradition and the Spirit-inspired witness of the apostles.
 - Through the Magisterium of the Church led and guided by the Holy Spirit.
 - In the liturgy and sacraments, the signs, symbols, words, and sacramental actions through which the Holy Spirit makes Christ present to every age.
 - Through prayer, the prayer, as St. Paul reminded us, that the Spirit prays in and through us.
 - In the ministries and gifts given to the Church by the Holy Spirit that

continue to strengthen and build up the Church to witness to Christ in the world.

- In the ongoing apostolic mission of the Church. The Spirit is the initiator in every positive movement of change.
- In the inspired lives of saints both past and present.

Symbols of the Holy Spirit

Refer here to *Catechism of the Catholic Church* articles 694-701.

- ▶ *Water.* The Holy Spirit is given to us in the water of baptism. Water is the effective sign of new birth in Christ. We were born once of water in the womb, so too are we born again of water in the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ *Anointing.* Pope Paul VI affirmed that the Holy Spirit is to the oil of confirmation, what Christ is to bread and wine in the Eucharist. The oil and anointing with oil convey, gift, and manifest the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ *Fire.* Fire is a sign of the “transforming energy” of the Holy Spirit’s work (696). The Holy Spirit revitalizes and transforms all who are touched by the Spirit’s power. It is fascinating to note that in the big redwood forests, fire is required for new trees to sprout. Fire energy gives birth to new seedlings. What a wonderful metaphor for the working of the Holy Spirit. The fire of the Spirit is present in every transformative, life-giving event in the lives of believers.
- ▶ *Cloud and Light.* Whenever cloud and light appear in Scripture it means a theophany has occurred. God’s revelation to the people is taking place. Moses on Mount Sinai, the tent meeting, the wanderings in the desert, the overshadowing of Mary; the cloud that overshadowed Jesus at his transfiguration, and the voice from the clouds at Jesus’ baptism, were all moments of manifestation.
- ▶ *Seal.* The seal illustrates the indelible effect of anointing with the Spirit. The Spirit imprints his “indelible character” upon those who are anointed. That is why confirmation is not repeated. A *forever seal* has been placed upon the anointed one, a seal that cannot be broken.
- ▶ *Hand.* The hand is a sign of Jesus’ healing and reconciling mission. He placed hands on people and they were healed and saved. The early tradition of the Church attests to hands being laid upon people thus conferring the Holy Spirit upon them. Thus, the Spirit is present and active in the laying on of hands (Greek: *epiclesis*).
- ▶ *Finger.* The hymn *Veni Creator* refers to the Spirit as the finger of God’s right hand.
- ▶ *Dove.* A dove is sent at the end of the flood in the book of Genesis, understood as an image of baptism. Baptism is the conferral of the Holy Spirit. A dove comes down at Jesus’ baptism and is understood as the Holy Spirit. Christian art very often depicts the Spirit as a dove.

Holy Spirit Is God's Gift

- ▶ We have been gifted with God's forgiving love through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ We are all sinners; yet, we are forgiven. The Holy Spirit restores us to the fullness of life with God.
- ▶ We know the Holy Spirit has been given because we know and have experienced God's love for us. There is no way we can know that love except through the power of the Spirit.
- ▶ The Spirit empowers us to manifest the love and gifts we have been given. We are gifted with fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- ▶ When we take up our cross and follow Jesus, when we renounce the self and live for God, we are living in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

- ▶ The Holy Spirit showers us with gifts so that we can more perfectly enter into communion with God.
- ▶ What gifts have we been given by the Holy Spirit so that we can more fully know, love, and serve the living God?
 - *Wisdom:* We have been given the gift of wisdom so that we can experience the work of God in our everyday lives.
 - *Understanding:* We have been given the gift of understanding so we can learn to be better disciples and follow Christ more earnestly. The gift of understanding helps us not be swept away by conflicting ideologies; it helps us know the truth when placed before us.
 - *Right judgment:* The gift of right judgment helps us understand the difference between right and wrong. When gifted with right judgment the person is able to make appropriate choices to follow Christ and his teachings.
 - *Courage:* The gift of courage helps us overcome fear and to be zealous in our will to follow Christ, no matter what the cost. The gift of courage helps us stand up for what is right, regardless of what we might suffer for doing so.
 - *Knowledge:* The gift of knowledge helps us understand God's revelation to us. Knowledge helps us believe in God's revelation about Christ and his saving mission. It also compels us to learn more about Scripture and Tradition.
 - *Reverence:* The gift of reverence instills in us a deep respect for God and for the Church. The gift of reverence helps us be ever-mindful of our absolute need for God. Through the gift of reverence, the believer is empowered to worship and serve God to the fullest.
 - *Fear (awe) of the Lord:* The fear of the Lord allows us to approach God with utmost awe and majesty—to truly see ourselves as creature in relation to God the Creator. A person with this gift understands that God is the

object of all his or her desires. God is the perfection of all the gifts we desire. God is perfect goodness, God is perfect understanding, God is perfect love. A person with this gift fears alienating himself or herself from God who is the object and end of life's meaning and existence.

- ▶ Thomas Aquinas divided the gifts as follows: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel are directed toward the mind and intellect. The gifts of fortitude, reverence, and fear of the Lord direct the will, the heart, and the spirit toward God.



Mystagogy & your decision for change

Catechist invites participants to share what they heard in this session.

- ▶ Who is the Holy Spirit?
- ▶ What is the Holy Spirit's role in your life today?
- ▶ What is the Holy Spirit's primary role in the world?
- ▶ What is the Holy Spirit's role in the Church? How do we know the Holy Spirit through the Church?
- ▶ Why can we be confident of our belief in the Holy Spirit?
- ▶ What are some symbols of the Holy Spirit and what do they mean?
- ▶ How do you know the Spirit is leading and moving in you?
- ▶ Is there anything about the Holy Spirit that confuses you, or makes you uncomfortable?
- ▶ What about belief in the Trinity? What do you believe? If you struggle with belief in the Trinity what did you learn today that could help you in that struggle?

Liturgy, Scripture, and doctrine challenges us to transform our lives so that we can go out and help transform the world. The Spirit empowers us to go out and transform the world.

Catechist informs the group of any parish activity taking place and makes arrangements for group participation. For example: God's Spirit is powerfully active in our parish. There are so many ways to reach out to God's people. Our parish is sponsoring a free trade sale this weekend intended to see the wares of third country communities so they can secure a fair price for their labors. They need volunteers to help with the sale. Volunteers are also needed at our social concerns office; you can call for more information.

Catechist invites participants to respond in faith to one or more of the following challenges.

- ▶ In what way does this teaching on the Holy Spirit challenge you at this time in your life?
- ▶ In what way is the Spirit prompting change in your life?
- ▶ What needs to change?
- ▶ In what way does today's session on the Holy Spirit invite you to more fully enter into Christ's death and resurrection? What do you need to die to in your life right now?
- ▶ Where is new life or resurrection needed? What can you do to make that happen?
- ▶ What are you powerless over and where in your life is the power of the Spirit needed to intervene?
- ▶ What one thing are you willing to do this week in response to what we have shared today? Change a belief, a behavior, an action, an addiction?

Journal

Question for reflection throughout the week: Use one of the questions above that were not asked in the session and reflect on it in your journal throughout the week.



Closing Prayer

Option 1: If this is a catechumenal session, end the session with Intercessions, Doxology ("Glory be to the Father..."), a minor rite—a blessing or minor exorcism, RCIA #90-97.

Option 2: If this is *not* a catechumenal setting, end with one or both of the Opening Prayers for Pentecost Sunday or Trinity Sunday in the Sacramentary. Include Intercessions and the Lord's Prayer.

Appendix

#1. The role of the Spirit is to enlighten our hearts and minds and bring us into communion with Christ. I have spent a lifetime being profoundly aware of the Spirit's prompting in my life. Through the course of a day, if I remember to be attentive to it, I find myself entering into the prayer that is prayed within me by the Holy Spirit.

Even though I profoundly believe in the role of the Spirit to lead me to Christ, I am at times plagued by doubt. I was so thankful when Mother Theresa shared that she had similar doubts. I felt as though I had a companion on the journey. The dark night of the soul is a most uncomfortable place. One would think that if it is the Spirit's role to reveal Christ to us, then it should be easy, there should never be doubts, and above all there should never be dark nights with which to contend. Yet the paradox of the Holy Spirit is that it is just in those dark nights; it is in the midst of such doubt, that the Spirit brings us to a new level of Christ awareness.

My job is to yield to it, to remain attentive to prayer, but yield to the working of the Spirit, knowing that I am being led into deeper communion with Christ. It takes faith that I cannot muster on my own; but faith I must yield to since it is given by the Spirit.

Thus if someone were to say to me, "I thought the Holy Spirit was suppose to reveal Christ to you, so why then are you experiencing doubt?" My answer would be, "The Spirit is inviting me deeper; the Spirit will gift me with the faith I need. I am called to trust and be patient. Faith is a gift. I trust I have been given the gift. The feelings will just have to wait."

The other side of doubt is magnificent assurance. Life is a cycle of doubt and magnificent assurances. Each time we are invited more deeply into the mystery. My job is to let the Spirit do what the Spirit does. The more I interfere, the longer it takes.

The Holy Spirit Handout

Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Dominum et vivificantem (On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World)*, invites reflection on the mystery of the Holy Spirit. In this encyclical, Pope John Paul II reminds us:

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 - *Understanding:* We have been given the gift of understanding so we can learn to be better disciples and follow Christ more earnestly. The gift of understanding helps us not be swept away by conflicting ideologies; it helps us know the truth when placed before us.
 - *Right judgment:* The gift of right judgment helps us understand the difference between right and wrong. When gifted with right judgment the person is able to make appropriate choices to follow Christ and his teachings.
 - *Courage:* The gift of courage helps us overcome fear and to be zealous in our will to follow Christ, no matter what the cost. The gift of courage helps us stand up for what is right, regardless of what we might suffer for doing so.
 - *Knowledge:* The gift of knowledge helps us understand God's revelation to us. Knowledge helps us believe in God's revelation about Christ and his saving mission. It also compels us to learn more about Scripture and Tradition.
 - *Reverence:* The gift of reverence instills in us a deep respect for God and for the Church. The gift of reverence helps us be ever-mindful of our absolute need for God. Through the gift of reverence, the believer is empowered to worship and serve God to the fullest.
 - *Fear (awe) of the Lord:* The fear of the Lord allows us to approach God with utmost awe and majesty—to truly see ourselves as creature in relation to God the Creator. A person with this gift understands that God is the

object of all his or her desires. God is the perfection of all the gifts we desire. God is perfect goodness, God is perfect understanding, God is perfect love. A person with this gift fears alienating himself or herself from God who is the object and end of life's meaning and existence.

- Thomas Aquinas divided the gifts as follows: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel are directed toward the mind and intellect. The gifts of fortitude, reverence, and fear of the Lord direct the will, the heart, and the spirit toward God.